



LIFTING A RIVER'S SPIRITS

KATA MCCARVILLE, FAYETTE PHOTOS BY KEVIN SANDERS
Upper Iowa professor organizes Volga River cleanup and helicopter lift

Who do you call when a 3,500 pound tank sits in your favorite spot along the Volga River? If you're Kata McCarville, it's the National Guard. McCarville, an assistant geosciences professor at Upper Iowa University in Fayette, rounded up students and 50 volunteers to tackle river trash—with no means to move the old co-op truck tank. A disastrous 1999 flood stranded the tank next to Big Rock, a picturesque student hangout inaccessible by roads. While volunteers yanked a motel sign, teapots, bicycles, propane tanks and tires from the river, the National Guard hovered above in a Chinook helicopter. In less than 10 minutes, the helicopter swiftly lifted the tank and dropped it into Birdnow Auto Salvage a few miles away. "It's an ongoing mission of ours to move equipment, so this is

great training for us, and fun to do," says Chief Warrant Officer 4 and pilot Dan LeDoux of the Iowa Army National Guard unit based in Davenport. McCarville organized the cleanup along the 12-mile river stretch after kayaking with a class. A \$900 Community Leaders Enhancing Area Rivers (CLEAR) Grant from the DNR allowed her to recycle the tank and other scrap metal pulled from the river. "It was a real opportunity to blend what I want to do in the classroom and something that would benefit the community," McCarville says. "The Volga has a lot going for it, but I wanted to see the community protect it and use it as a draw for recreation."



Mark and Terry Brockway with Terry's grandson, Joel Salvador.

RESTORING A REFUGE

MARK AND TERRY BROCKWAY, BURLINGTON
Brothers renovate vast wetland area and create wildlife refuge

Today, it's a luxurious rest stop for ducks and wildlife along their migration interstate. The land where the Skunk River meets the Mississippi more resembled a dilapidated roadside motel, logged and silted in, before Burlington brothers Mark and Terry Brockway restored 1,600 acres. "Mark and I decided if there was a possibility to purchase the property, we would, to save it. We made a promise that we would turn 85 percent of it into a refuge," Terry says. They restored 600 acres of wetlands, allowed streams to meander and planted 5,000 trees, earning them the 2007 National Wetlands Award for Landowner Stewardship. The brothers planted natural grasses, sunflowers and milkweed, producing a natural buffet for bald eagles, blue herons, egrets, game birds, songbirds, even butterflies. "One year we had millions of monarchs. You couldn't see through them they were so thick," Mark says. The duo worked with many organizations, but paid most of the costs themselves. "Their level of motivation stands out, because of their passion for nature," says Randy Robb, a Natural Resources Conservation Service wetland restoration specialist. The brothers opened their Greater Blue Heron Wildlife Refuge to the public. "Our dad has always taught us to enjoy nature and protect it," Terry says. "I'm almost 65 and felt it was time to give back to nature, and this was the perfect area to do that."

A HISTORICAL RENDEZVOUS

MYLES KUPKA AND AL BECKER, FORT ATKINSON
Volunteers work more than 15 years to share the area's rich history

For more than 15 years, Al Becker and Myles Kupka have been digging up history at the Fort Atkinson State Preserve in Winneshiek County. The pair works with archeological excavations, organizes volunteers, writes grants and teaches schoolchildren—earning an outstanding service award from the Iowa State Preserves Advisory Board. "They are a miracle in getting local volunteers excited about history and preservation," says board member Cindy Peterson. The fort, occupied from 1840 to 1849, sat in disarray for years. Today, it's a highly valued archaeological site and teaching tool, thanks to Becker and Kupka. The pair has coordinated digs that unearthed artifacts from the fort which stood in the "neutral zone," where the federal government moved the Winnebago to separate the feuding Sioux, Sac and Fox. "We want to keep it for someone else. The area (neutral zone) here is unique—it's the only one," says Kupka, who's led the Fort Atkinson Historical Preservation Commission since its inception in 1990. Becker, a history teacher for 30 years, visits schools in period dress before the annual Fort Atkinson Rendezvous' School Day, where more than 1,000 students watch demonstrations on Iowa pioneer life. "It's taking our local history and putting it into perspective," Becker says.

